



Conference report

NATO's post 2014 strategic narrative

Monday 17 – Wednesday 19 March 2014 | WP1319





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Executive summary

A strategic narrative is a story an organisation tells to communicate its purpose, will and intent. An effective strategic narrative must reflect real strategy that in turn properly balances ends, ways and means. Searching for such balance has been the essential story of NATO since the end of the Cold War. A new balance is today demanded of the Alliance that will reflect the ability and capability of NATO to conduct operations across the full spectrum of missions from stabilisation and reconstruction to high-end warfighting. However, NATO faces a major challenge in convincing hard-pressed Alliance publics that security and defence must be afforded in the face of government cuts. Therefore, NATO's strategic narrative and the strategic communications and public diplomacy that support it will be critical if the Alliance is to be properly configured for the post-2014 challenges and shocks the twenty-first century will undoubtedly generate.

To that end NATO public diplomacy and strategic communications must be at the interface between political and military NATO. NATO must become an information and influence hub that fosters strategic unity of effort and purpose with the strategic narrative the glue between the North Atlantic Council, the Secretary-General, Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT). Consistency of strategy and purpose reinforced by will and capabilities must be the main elements in both NATO strategy and its supporting narrative.

The master narrative

The Alliance must re-state its level of ambition. The 2014 NATO Wales Summit takes place at a tipping point not just in NATO's story with the resurgence of challenges and threats on its southern and eastern flanks, but also at the very moment the world slides back into Realpolitik in which balances of power and the pursuit of narrow national interest come to define security. The post-2014 development of NATO takes place against the backdrop of Russia's annexation of Crimea. There is a pressing need for NATO to send a strong message about the Alliance's determination. This is not just to ensure the security and defence of the Euro-Atlantic community but to reaffirm NATO's role in global risk management in the twenty-first century.

The necessary forces and resources will be made available to the Alliance as part of a broad-based approach to security that combines credible collective defence with effective crisis management and co-operative security built on enduring partnerships. To fulfil its duty to citizens across the Euro-Atlantic area NATO will need new and more advanced military capabilities. Given the challenging financial and economic environment the Alliance will seek to assist its nations to balance affordability, credibility and capability through the Smart Defence and Connected Forces Initiative.

NATO remains central to security and peace the world over. Therefore, it is time for a new Transatlantic Declaration that reaffirms the core principles of the Alliance and its abiding

commitments, as well as to recommit to the men and women in uniform who guarantee peace and security.

NATO's multifaceted messages

NATO is a military alliance and will defend its member nations using all possible means. The credibility of the Alliance is built on credible armed forces which remain vitally important as guarantors of peace and stability. Military capabilities are not ends in themselves. They are part of a balanced package of tools and instruments that promote peace and stability and as such provide democratic political leaders with political options in the face of complex challenges.

NATO must prepare for all future contingencies including threats to the security and defence of its member nations; Russia's annexation of Crimea is a powerful reminder that NATO's fundamental purpose of collective defence remains all too valid. The Alliance must also have the means and the will to reach out and work with all those engaged in stabilisation and reconstruction across the international community in support of efforts to prevent or react to humanitarian crises. While NATO is fundamentally a military alliance, it must be prepared to respond to emerging threats such as cyber-attacks and energy disruption.

NATO is vital if the nations are to provide and afford more robust armed forces as part of a broad package of capabilities that can operate to effect across the mission spectrum. NATO is a champion of strategic flexibility and acts as a force multiplier, offering effective and cost effective command and control, enablers and enhanced interoperability between allies and partners. Given the twin challenges of strategic shift and austerity the future Alliance will need to be organised and operate very differently. Innovation, co-operation and integration of effort and purpose will be critical. The United States is busy and the cavalry might not come as quickly as it will be needed. Europeans must do more and more together.

NATO is entering a new and unpredictable era as the Alliance shifts from operations to contingencies. The 2014 Wales Summit must provide the necessary political guidance to enable the Alliance to properly prepare for a challenging future.

Recommendations for the NATO Wales Summit

- The Summit should provide political guidance to the Alliance to start to properly assess the shifts taking place in the strategic environment and undertake an audit of existing capabilities and capacities across the Alliance.
- A Transatlantic Declaration is needed as the centre-piece of the agenda at the 2014 NATO Wales Summit that also commits the Allies to a new transatlantic security contract. The Declaration should indicate in a forceful way that the transatlantic bond remains strong and unwavering.
- Heads of State should pledge to reverse the decline in defence spending and meet the 2% of GDP defence spending goal as economies improve.
- The Summit must re-energize the relationship between security and the citizen, of which NATO is a vital part. In the past NATO's purpose was self-evident, today that is no longer the case.
- NATO needs more agile, projectable military forces that can act as a hub for multinational, joint operations that will give powerful meaning to the idea of an international community. NATO must resist the temptation to return to a primarily forward defence posture as a result of the annexation of Crimea.
- NATO will not be best placed in many of these instances to be the first provider of security. However, the Alliance will need a full spectrum of military capabilities to cope with the surprises and shocks the strategic environment will generate. The

Summit needs to consider how best to configure NATO so that it can better exploit knowledge that would help prevent such shocks.

- The NATO Strategic Concept should be re-assessed at the Wales Summit as much has happened since its agreement at the 2010 Lisbon Summit. The Summit must give political guidance to begin the process of prioritising tasks. Article 5 collective defence must be reaffirmed to include counter-terrorism, ballistic missile defence (BMD) and cyber.
- By September the Ukraine crisis is unlikely to have been resolved. The challenge for the Summit will be to communicate resolve without escalating to the point that a new Cold War begins.
- Central to the Wales Summit should be the promotion of the Alliance as a cost-effective and credible platform for the delivery of enhanced security and defence.
- NATO public diplomacy and strategic communications need to sit at the interface between political and military NATO to ensure a strong link between strategy and narrative.
- Efforts to strengthen NATO's partnerships should be accelerated and not placed on a back burner as a result of the new focus on Article 5. NATO should create an Enhanced Partnership category with added benefits and responsibilities for the most capable partners.

NATO yesterday, today and tomorrow

The crisis in Ukraine-Crimea must be seen in a historical context. This is not the start of a new Cold War, unless Putin overreaches and invades all of Ukraine. However, Europe's security and defence architecture must be reinforced and made fit for the challenges of the twenty-first century. Given NATO's past, present and future story it is time for a new Transatlantic Declaration that reaffirms the core principles of the Alliance and its abiding commitments.

1. The main lessons of NATO's past is that soft power that is not underpinned by credible hard power is deemed by many – adversaries and allies alike – to reflect weakness. Weakness is the nemesis of influence. Without significant modernisation the Alliance could in time turn into a “zombie Alliance”.
2. Lessons from the past twenty-five years also suggest the need for a NATO with a more global outlook, which can only be generated by a stable Europe. There is also a pressing need for more agile, projectable military forces that can act as a hub for multinational, joint operations that will give powerful meaning to the idea of an international community. That in turn suggests the need for NATO to systematically expand its partnerships.
3. In some respects President Putin's annexation of Crimea has reminded both leaders and peoples of the reason for NATO. Russia has also highlighted the tensions that exist within the Alliance between those nations mainly to the east that believe the focus should be on collective defence, and those that see effective crisis management and co-operative security as the stuff of twenty-first century security.
4. A deep divide exists across the Alliance and within governments between those that believe soft power only works if it is underpinned by credible hard power and those that believe soft power alone will suffice. To say the least, the lack of any agreement over strategy makes the crafting of a single grand strategic narrative problematic.
5. Central to the Alliance post-2014 will be its place in shifting American strategy. This is critical because interest in NATO in Washington (and some other capitals) is at its lowest level since 1949 and the founding of the Alliance. Such a debate also

“NATO over the past ten years has been too binary; we either do everything or we do nothing”

presupposes the search for a new centre of gravity between the US and its Allies over the size, scope and capabilities of their armed forces. Fail and another politically-toxic argument over burden-sharing will weaken the political foundations of the Alliance, possibly fatally. While many view responsibility sharing as a preferred term, with burden-sharing seen as outdated and divisive, the meaning is still vital to the Alliance.

6. Therefore, given these tensions and frictions the Alliance needs to be politically reaffirmed at the September 2014 Wales Summit after more than a decade of challenging operations. Some twenty-four years after the end of the Cold War, a Transatlantic Declaration is needed as the centre-piece of the agenda at the 2014 NATO Wales Summit.
7. The nature of US leadership in NATO is in need of confirmation at the Summit. A new transatlantic security contract would be established by which the United States agrees to pay more attention to NATO as long as the European allies do more to support the US in addressing security challenges beyond Europe, including in Asia-Pacific. Such a contract would also implicitly recognise that security is not indivisible and that some allies will be better suited for some missions than others and any narrative should reflect such variable geometry.
8. Russia has also highlighted the limits of NATO's realistic ambition and the narrative should reflect that with regard to future enlargements and NATO's Open Door policy, particularly as it concerns Ukraine and Georgia. Does the Alliance insist on the principle of the sovereign right of states to make their own alliances, or should it accept de facto recognition of Russia's sphere of influence. Some Allies believe Ukraine will not be brought into the West until Russia is part of the West. This will make a single narrative hard to craft beyond the merely declaratory.
9. There is a good story for NATO to tell at the Summit even if it would be political mistake to dwell too long on Afghanistan. Many of the Allies went to Afghanistan with a genuine will to do something useful to support the United States, which has not always been recognised in Washington.
10. The agenda of the Wales Summit should therefore focus the Alliance determinedly on a narrative for the future which is grounded in political and strategic reality. At the same time Alliance leaders will need to confront some uncomfortable truths: the Comprehensive or Integrated Approach failed in Afghanistan but will remain a vital component in the NATO toolbox; NATO-EU relations do not work but are critical to the future utility and effect of both organisations; and negotiations over the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) have stalled but are the vital centre-piece of a twenty-first century transatlantic relationship. Above all the Summit must re-energise the relationship between security and the citizen of which NATO is a vital part. In the past NATO's purpose was self-evident, but that is no longer the case today in spite of Russia's annexation of Crimea. Indeed, many citizens have taken on an entrenched view that NATO is a military alliance for a threat that no longer exists.
11. At the very least some shared level of ambition must be established given the change in the international security environment and thereafter tasks and resources properly prioritised. Ideally, the Wales Summit should re-commit NATO nations to the target of spending 2% of GDP on armed forces if security in the Euro-Atlantic area is to remain indivisible. Failure to invest in credible armed forces will over time reduce NATO to a force generator for limited coalitions undertaking limited operations such as Operation Unified Protector in 2011. The 2010 NATO Strategic Concept was agreed by all the Allies. By revisiting the Concept four years into its life at this critical juncture could provide the basis for some level of agreement between the Allies over NATO's future strategic orientation.

“We must base our response on capability and intent”

NATO's role in a changing world

The strategic environment is full of friction with traditional and non-traditional risks and threats emerging. NATO is the ultima ratio guardian of liberty and security.

12. Alliance leaders must address two fundamental questions at this pivotal summit – one short and the other longer-term. First, how do they want the Ukraine crisis to end and what must be done? Second, what is NATO for? Only then can a strategic narrative be crafted that is credible and relevant to the twenty-first century strategic environment.
13. Emerging risks are driven by massive change underway in the strategic environment. NATO may not always be the first responder in crises even if the Alliance remains critical to ensuring deterrence, reassurance and defence, and by extension stability. However, the Alliance must first answer a seminal question; military force for what? NATO cannot be a silver bullet to be fired at all crises.
14. The emerging strategic environment generates a range of challenges for the Alliance. This is not least because many NATO nations are again split between those that take a more idealistic view of change and those that take a more realist viewpoint. In that light the struggle of the Alliance to find its role in the twenty-first century is linked to fundamental questions about political ambition and the utility of force in complex environments.
15. This question implies some uncertainty over NATO's role and effectiveness across a range of contingencies that deter, prevent and mitigate conflict. At the very least the Summit should provide political guidance to the Alliance to start to properly assess the shifts taking place in the strategic environment and undertake an audit of existing capabilities and capacities across the Alliance.
16. The Syrian and Ukrainian crises demonstrate the danger of several threats merging as great powers wrestle for influence, preventing solutions to humanitarian tragedies. The emergence of China and growing tensions in Asia-Pacific also demonstrate the extent to which the Alliance must prepare for challenges across the conflict spectrum and across the world.
17. Human security in all its myriad forms will also impact upon the Alliance and will give meaning to co-operative security, particularly with sister institutions such as the UN, EU and OSCE. Energy security and ensuring free movement across the global commons will become the stuff of NATO's activities alongside more traditional roles. This is not least because the proliferation and use of dangerous technologies such as cyber must be considered as both an opportunity and a threat for the twenty-first century Alliance.
18. NATO must also pay close attention to the profound shift in the military balance away from NATO members both within Europe and beyond and how societal change will impact on the ability of the Alliance to conduct military operations. Urbanisation and littoralisation are taking place in parallel with the rapid growth in the world's population. These developments reinforce the critical relationship between economic security and defence. The threat posed by extremism has yet to be overcome and is indeed spreading into areas vital to Alliance security such as North Africa, the Middle East, Sahel and sub-Saharan Africa, and in so doing undermining regional and global security and stability. All of which the Alliance must pay close heed.
19. Whilst NATO will not be best placed in many of these instances to be the first provider of security the Alliance will need a full spectrum of military capabilities to cope with the surprises and shocks the strategic environment will generate. The Summit needs to consider how best to configure NATO so that it can better exploit knowledge that would help prevent such shocks.
20. The UN Security Council has again become paralysed by power politics. Consequently, the West's belief in a law-based approach to international relations focused on

international institutions and power is being challenged. Indeed, the Summit takes place at a tipping point not just in NATO's story but at the very moment the world slides back into Realpolitik in which balances of power and the pursuit of narrow national interest come to define security.

21. Therefore, NATO Strategic Concept should be re-assessed at the Wales Summit as much has happened since its agreement at the 2010 Lisbon Summit. Prior to Russia's annexation of Crimea the Summit was to have focussed primarily on the strengthening of NATO's many partnerships. However, by September the Ukraine crisis is unlikely to have been resolved. The challenge for the Summit will be to communicate resolve without escalating to the point that a new Cold War begins.
22. To some extent President Putin's world-view is now central to the Alliance narrative. This creates a dilemma for the Alliance (as it was designed so to do); what relationship now to be forged between deterrence, reassurance and escalation? How far is Russia prepared to go? Is NATO prepared to confront Russia? Putin sees EU influence as a threat. What are the implications for the Alliance?
23. President Putin is a shrewd adversary who has cleverly combined Russia's military modernisation, Europe's retreat from strategic robustness, and the dependence of many Europeans on Russia for much of their energy to extend Russia's influence back across much of the European Continent. In so doing the Putin regime also projects nuclear, cyber and conventional intimidation to all those in and around Russia's borders. Moreover, as Russians buy up media across Europe, particularly in the Baltic States, Moscow could well move to control the narrative to shape Europe's thinking.

"The real narrative is about credibility. NATO's narrative should not be about NATO but about NATO's business"

Balancing politics, publics and strategic communications

The Alliance needs to make better and more contact with the citizens of NATO nations. Equally, consistency of narrative will be vital, allied to the need for NATO to be able to do what it says. A narrative that suggests NATO is the all-purpose force for good in the world should be avoided.

24. As NATO draws down its effort in Afghanistan the Alliance will need to move from visibility to credibility. The Alliance will thus need to create a vehicle similar to "Defence Matters" that helps smaller European states justify defence expenditures. Equally, NATO should not search for a single "bumper sticker" narrative but rather multiple narratives built on the flexibility and agility the future Alliance will need to cope with inevitable surprises and shocks.
25. Operations in Afghanistan have often reinforced the gap between the narrative and reality. 'Success' has too often been declared when the reality on the ground is very different. The twenty-four hour news cycle allied to the access NATO citizens enjoy to social media and web-based information and disinformation has accelerated growing cynicism. This in turn has undermined the credibility and effect of both NATO public diplomacy and strategic communications.
26. What is the public perception of NATO? Is NATO effective? What is success and failure? These three questions are at the heart of NATO's strategic communications challenge. On the face of it NATO is strong in the public mind. In a 2012 elite survey NATO was well-respected but not at "top of the mind". In Europe 66% of people surveyed had a positive view of NATO compared with 85% in North America, although only 45% of respondents in Greece and Turkey had a positive view. However, such support is very soft. NATO sits close to the bottom of the list of international organisations that people felt should lead in a crisis with only 1% of Belgians placing NATO at the top of the list. Prior to the Ukraine Crisis Central and Eastern Europeans were highly confident that NATO was important for their own security, whilst only 15-20% of North Americans believed the same.
27. According to the Transatlantic Trends Survey of 1000 Americans and Europeans, 46%

of the former and 56% of the latter see NATO as a political alliance of democracies. However, only 15% of Americans and 12% of Europeans see NATO as a military instrument.

28. At the political level three statements reflect the challenge faced by the Alliance as it considers its place and role in the twenty-first century:
 - NATO nations have for too long exploited the defence premium;
 - NATO's strategic narrative has been shaped by geopolitics; and
 - NATO publics do not understand what NATO is for.
29. Critically, uncertainty over the utility of the Alliance has also helped undermine the utility of force. Moreover, many of the Alliance's armed forces are today so small that there is little public understanding of their utility. Far from generating the admiration and respect of people many armed forces are the subject of charity and sympathy.
30. All things being equal, as the Alliance shifts from operations to contingencies public support will further wain and pressure will grow to cut defence budgets to fund welfare, health and education programmes. An effective strategic communications campaign will be critical to reconnect Alliance citizens with NATO and the armed forces that defend them if sufficient political momentum is to be generated to place sound defence on the political agenda.
31. Equally, the Ukraine-Crimea crisis could paradoxically create the conditions for a new engagement with interested publics about NATO's purpose and utility. However, strategic and political unity of effort and purpose across the Alliance would be critical if such a message was to have any chance of resonating with crisis-averse publics.
32. At the political level NATO's strategic narrative is in some disarray. Too often a profound gap exists between strategic reality and the political narrative. Indeed, politicians have often chosen to keep people ill-informed about either operations or the nature of emerging security challenges for fear of losing elections. This has reinforced growing scepticism about the Alliance and the utility of force. The continued impact of the 2003 Iraq War and the Snowden revelations about NSA surveillance on the public consciousness cannot be under-estimated. Therefore, central to the Wales Summit should be the promotion of the Alliance as a cost-effective and credible platform for the delivery of enhanced security and defence.
33. NATO is a high politics institution and must therefore engage far more effectively at the high political level. To that end, NATO's future strategy must also resolve the tensions between two competing narratives; a collective defence narrative that promotes a 'them and us' strategic culture, and a co-operative security one that suggests the search for consensual security relationships. This tension will likely increase as crises develop and the US demands NATO support for its global missions.
34. Honesty will be closely linked to credibility. Given the changing nature of public opinion and those who shape and form it NATO must move to create an effective digital interface as part of a strategic communications strategy to enable the Alliance to better engage effectively in social media debates.
35. NATO needs to become far more proactive and effective in getting the media to where NATO is engaged to see the reality on the ground. The Alliance must at the same time become less concerned that every message is a positive one. NATO must make better use of academia and the think-tank community as knowledge multipliers and implicit strategic communicators.
36. A first step would be to place those charged with NATO public diplomacy and strategic communications at the interface between political and military NATO. That in turn would demand a stronger relationship between them and the creation of an information and influence hub with the North Atlantic Council, the Secretary-General, ACO and ACT.

“The one good thing about a crisis is that it shows us we have reached the level of our thinking”

Hard narratives and credible scenarios

Narratives generate influence by telling the story of strategy, intent and capability. Therefore, strategic narratives will be the essential partner of Alliance strategy if NATO is to successfully defend its citizens against a range of possible attacks and in support of a range of possible actions. It is through narratives that NATO will help re-establish an essential relationship between the citizens and their security. However, both strategy and narrative must be credible.

37. NATO must become a strategic security hub that can project power, guarantee defence and promote resiliency across the conflict spectrum be it alone or in partnership with other institutions such as the UN, EU and OSCE. Future NATO would be a champion of strategic flexibility and act as force multiplier, offering effective command and control, enablers and enhanced interoperability between allies and partners. To that end, the Alliance must also be able to reach out and work with those engaged in stabilisation and reconstruction across the civilian human security community in support of efforts to prevent or react to humanitarian crises
38. In support of that aim NATO's real world strategic narratives are clear: NATO is part of globalisation not a remedy for it, and NATO must prepare for the dangerous futures that the dark side of globalisation could create. As the ultima ratio defence alliance NATO and its nations will sometimes need to take tough but legitimate action to defend its citizens. NATO must be prepared and ready to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.
39. Several possible and credible scenarios support the need for an agile, flexible and capable Alliance vital to the security and well-being of the Alliance citizen in the twenty-first century. Scenarios range from a major cyber-attack that takes place on US and/or European critical national infrastructure in which thousands are killed, a fragmenting Syria that threatens to lead to a wider Middle East war, to a crisis in the Baltic States that threatens to provoke a Russian intervention.
40. All the scenarios suggest the need for new narratives both to underpin deterrence and defence and to convince allies, partners, adversaries and of course publics that NATO has the will, intent and capabilities to meet such challenges. The Alliance must also be shaped to meet the new challenges.
41. The scenarios also reinforce the need for a more robust relationship between the Alliance and its citizens and with NATO acting as a security knowledge hub – a resource for members to use in the event of an attack allied to a narrative to that end. For example, societal vulnerability to attack would suggest NATO develop a Cyber Planning Group (CPG) and a Resilience Planning Group (RPG). Equally, the nature of such emerging challenges suggests the need for an expanded Emerging Security Challenges Division better able to reach out to knowledge communities across the Alliance and beyond. Such a capability would better enable the Alliance to prevent conflicts upstream, to mitigate conflict and to effectively support national civilian authorities in coping with the consequence of attacks.
42. Equally, in crises narratives work in both directions and the Alliance must become far better at understanding the 'stories' of others as a crisis develops. The scenarios suggest that adversaries will start by trying to exploit the seams, the grey areas between peace and war through the use of proxies to de-stabilise situations, as took place in Ukraine-Crimea. Understanding these narratives will take more than simply good intelligence but access as well to deep knowledge and expertise and the insertion of such knowledge early in the conflict cycle.
43. Exploitation of such seams will also be used to create division between NATO nations. The Alliance will need to be sufficiently politically robust for some nations to take action when others decide that they will not.

“We are meeting at an historic moment given what Russia has done”

44. Critically, all the scenarios reinforce the need for more military capabilities focussed on the development of a full spectrum deployed force as part of a broad package of capabilities that include diplomacy, aid and development. The challenge will be to craft a narrative to justify such capabilities to publics after years of government cuts.

The narrative and the force

NATO is a military alliance. The credibility of the Alliance is built on credible armed forces, which remain vitally important as guarantors of peace and stability. However, given the twin challenges of strategic shift and austerity the future Alliance will need to be organised and operate very differently. Innovation, co-operation and integration of effort and purpose will be critical.

45. History is full of strategic blunders and they often take the same pattern: hubris, faulty visions, under-estimation of adversaries and enemies with the assumption that any war will be short. The Alliance is in danger of making just such a mistake and no amount of ‘narratives’ however clever will compensate for a failure to adhere to the fundamental principles of strategy.
46. This is a big moment for the Alliance. NATO is wholly dependent on the strategic and defence choices the United States is now making. Cuts to the US defence budget are dramatic and amount to some two-thirds of Europe’s entire defence budget. The US spent some \$715bn on defence in 2011 including supplemental funding, which will be reduced to \$500bn by 2015 and perhaps to \$450bn beyond that if sequestration cuts are not reversed whilst Europeans have cut their defence budgets by 20% since 2001. The US invested roughly \$100,000 per soldier in 2011 compared with an average European investment of €24,000, with the interoperability gap between US and European forces growing daily. Whilst the US has recently deployed some 12.5% of its force, European deployments average about 3.5%. And whilst the US spends only 36% of its defence budget on personnel, most Europeans are spending between 50% and 75%, leaving equipment needs significantly under-resourced.
47. Furthermore, the United States is not just cutting its armed forces. It is shifting emphasis from land-centric forces to an air and maritime strategy that will afford Washington influence and effect across the vast swathes of the Asia-Pacific theatre. Such a shift has profound medium-to-long term implications for Europeans and the Alliance and suggests at the very least an urgent need to implement the Alliance Maritime Strategy to increase the response options implicit in the Strategic Concept.
48. Therefore, to ensure the post-2014 NATO strategic narrative is grounded in hard reality the Alliance must re-visit the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept and begin the process of prioritising tasks. Article 5 collective defence must be re-affirmed to include counter-terrorism, ballistic missile defence (BMD) and cyber. Article 4 crisis management operations will no longer have the supremacy they had over the past twenty years. However, the relationship between collective defence and crisis management will become closer as the nature of security challenges becomes both more intense and more diverse. Co-operative security will remain important as a vehicle to maintain and strengthen partnerships through security force assistance and defence diplomacy but will no longer be central to the purpose of the Alliance.
49. Smart Defence and the Connected Forces Initiative must be accelerated and fully implemented if a new balance between deterrence and defence, affordability, credibility and capability is to be established, damaging disputes over burden-sharing avoided and a high-end force generated that can act as hub for collective defence, crisis management and co-operative security missions. Force modernisation must concentrate on use of exercises, education, training and standards to enhance interoperability, including intellectual interoperability, as well as on the creation of more strategic enablers and increased precision strike.

“2014 is a transition year or a tipping point”

50. Nonetheless, it will be impossible to sustain the same level of interoperability that NATO had in Afghanistan in the absence of operations. It will be critical for ACT to determine the essential core of interoperability on which the Allies should focus. In sustaining this essential core of interoperability between the US and the other Allies, it will arguably be important for them to focus more on capability than capacity, with more collaborative US-European force planning. There appears to be interest in US DoD in this approach.
51. For Europeans to properly fulfil their part in a new transatlantic security contract they must fully commit to the Lisbon Critical Capabilities Commitment, Tier One Smart Defence Projects and the NATO Defence Planning Process. Thus far these initiatives and the flagship projects entailed therein have made modest progress at best. Germany's Framework Nation Concept and Britain's Joint Expeditionary Force both focus on regional clusters of nations sharing capabilities and will help maximize the Alliance's efficiency.

The narrative and the summit

NATO is entering a new and unpredictable era as the Alliance shifts from operations to contingencies. The 2014 Wales Summit must provide the necessary political guidance to enable the Alliance to properly prepare for a challenging future.

52. Prior to Russia's annexation of Crimea the agenda of NATO's 2014 Wales Summit was to have focused on partnerships. Leaders would have declared mission accomplished in Afghanistan and some thought would have been given to preserving interoperability between the forces of Alliance nations.
53. Russia's annexation of Crimea now poses four questions the Summit must address: (1) Can NATO provide credible collective defence to its members? (2) What type of reassurance can NATO provide? (3) What support can NATO offer to states on Russia's margins? (4) What relationship should now be sought with Russia, and what measures make for effective pressure upon it?
 - Can NATO provide credible collective defence to its members?

NATO collective defence needs to be made more credible. It has not been properly exercised for many years. Alliance Force Structures have been run down. Therefore, NATO's political leadership must assess what forces and assets are in place to deter and if needs be combat a Russian incursion into NATO allies on its borders? What intelligence assessment of Russian capabilities and intentions is being undertaken? Almost certainly Moscow will seek to exploit the seams in Alliance posture and solidarity via proxies. When would an Article 5 attack be deemed to have taken place? The use of cyber and terrorism must be included in such a judgement, together with a reinforcement of BMD as part of the necessary modernisation of collective defence architectures.
 - What type of reassurance can NATO provide?

A credible Article 5 collective defence posture is essential to re-assure NATO allies in the Baltic States and Romania and Bulgaria in particular. What graduated response could be put in place and communicated to both allies and Russia? What forces would be needed? Today, even defence requires advanced expeditionary forces and capabilities. The issue of Kaliningrad and its links with Russia must also be considered. Reassurance could take several forms, including a reinforcement of air policing along NATO's borders with Russia, enhanced military exercises (NATO's Steadfast Jazz involved 20,000 troops whilst Russia's ZAPAD 2013 exercise some 150,000 troops), the establishment of Alliance military infrastructure in central and eastern Europe, and possibly the early deployment to the Baltic States of the NATO Response Force, a US

Brigade Combat Team or another front-line formation such as 16 Air Assault Brigade.

- What support can NATO offer to states on Russia's margins?

NATO Partnerships must be re-considered in light of Russia's annexation of Crimea. Stability partnerships are those ties that help to stabilise a state or region, from both internal and external strains. Therefore, support for a country such as Ukraine would include a regular timetable of political and military-to-military meetings to help Kiev move towards the West. A specific Partnership Package could also be tailored to Ukraine's needs, built on institution-building and security force assistance (SFA). Such packages could also be tailored for all Partnership for Peace states, thus reinvigorating a tired concept. Strategic partnership would be offered to those states able and willing to support Alliance missions world-wide. This could include a Platinum, Gold, and Silver Card concept offering various levels of access to Alliance force structures and planning. Clearly offering such support to Ukraine would provoke a strong Russian response but it must be considered along with serious economic and energy assistance.

- What relationship should now be sought with Russia?

Depending on President Putin's next move NATO nations are at present split in their response to Russia's aggression. A new NATO Russia strategy is clearly needed that credibly emphasises a carrot and stick approach to Moscow. Until the Ukraine crisis is resolved Russia must be excluded from key Alliance decisions. Clearly, the planned NATO-Russia Council meeting at the Summit must be cancelled. Equally, a line of contact should be kept open that links confidence-building to Russia's behaviour. This could include the search for a new conventional force balance in Europe. Such a strategy would have limited effect in the short-term due to the size and scope of Russia's forces, Russia's strategic depth, and NATO's unwillingness to spend on armed forces. However, it would test Moscow's bona fides, particularly if Russia agreed to hold forces a long way back from the border.

"Narrative is how we make sense of the world"

Conclusion

Emile Simpson states, "to draw a distinction between strategy and strategic narrative is misguided; as the explanation of actions strategic narrative is simply strategy expressed in a narrative form". A strategic narrative must help achieve two objectives; delivery of promised actions and outcomes and the identification of motives, needs and desires.

Given NATO's now long story and the need again to shift the focus of the Alliance from one set of challenges to new and daunting ones, NATO's new strategic narrative will be critical in both understanding and communicating the changes the Alliance must face. Therefore, the Alliance will need to transform the many smaller narratives that sustain today's NATO into some form of grand narrative if NATO is to generate the momentum that will rekindle strategic credibility and political support.

Alliance leaders must understand the distinction between narrative and message. Narratives are the essential glue that holds elites together, whilst messages are what people understand. Today, NATO sits at the interface between leadership, opinion, knowledge and ignorance.

Therefore, the choices leaders make (or do not make) at the NATO Wales Summit will decide if Alliance strategy and its strategic narrative remain as one or they diverge. Divergence over time could not only condemn the Alliance to failure but its peoples to

disaster. No longer can the Alliance call failure success and weakness strength. Those days are gone. President Putin has made sure of that.

Julian Lindley-French

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